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FOREWORD

The story of Kashmir for the last four centuries is an unending tragedy unfortunately brought on themselves by the very people of this most beautiful and enchanting land. Kashmir has been called a Paradise on Earth. Almost all famous explorers and travellers who have visited Kashmir since ancient times praise in their accounts and travelogues the natural beauty of this land. The lofty mountains with snow clad peaks and glaciers. Dense and lush green forests dotted with enchanting meadows. Gushing mountain streams with water rushing down on boulders resembling fast flowing milk. High altitude mountain lakes with hanging glaciers sticking to cliffs surround these and ice floes floating within. The mountain slopes and meadows with rows upon rows of all varieties of flowers and scented herbs. The dense forests with very tall pines unmatched in majesty and grandeur. Dozens of side valleys of savage beauty not seen any where in the world. The beauty of nature is truly overpowering and awe inspiring. It is beyond description and can only be experienced by being there!

The description of the Promised Land in Bible aptly fits Kashmir. According to the Bible, Paradise-the place where humankind was created lay to the East. "And the Lord

God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed." The Garden of Eden is stated to be situated between four rivers. Mesopotamia, where the Garden of Eden is usually supposed to exist, has only two rivers as the name of the region implies. Whereas the area around Kashmir has four rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, and Ravi. Thus Kashmir is truly a land between the rivers.

The Bible mentions that the Lord showed Moses the Promised Land but directed him not to enter it. "Go thee unto Mount Nebo and die, but thou shalt not go unto the land which I give to the children of Israel." "The Lord said unto Moses, get thee on top of Mount Pisgah and lift up thine eyes eastward, and northward, westward and southward and behold the Promised Land. The land of milk and honey. The land which drinketh the water of heaven. The land is good and peaceable. The Land where no galley with oars shall go!

According to some legends Moses is buried near Athwattu in the land of Moab (Mowu) opposite Bandipore. This was earlier known as Bethpor, which is a derivative from the Biblical Beth-Peor. The view of the valley from top of the mountain, known locally as Nebo-bal, is as per the description of the Promised Land. Kashmir is locally known as Kashir and a Kashmiri is called a Kosher. Jews call Kosher something acceptable and pure, especially in regard to food. Many explorers and travellers from ancient times have written about the striking resemblance of Kashmir to Biblical lands. It has also been mentioned in many accounts that in ancient times Kashmiris allowed only Jews to enter the valley. A Kashmiri shepherd wearing a robe (pheran) and a skull cap, tending his sheep near a village, is a typical scene from a Biblical movie.

If Kashmir is the Promised Land, are Kashmiris God's Chosen People? The Jews call themselves the Chosen People of God. There are many theories about the origin of

Kashmiris and some claim that they are the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel. A lot of research was done on the subject by British anthropologists in mid-19th century

who were travelling with British troops. That research concluded that many of the Kashmiri tribes were remnants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. The main start to these theories about the Jewish origin of Kashmiris was given in the book by George Moore, *Lost Tribes*, printed in 1860. Subsequently a number of books have been written on -- related subjects, especially about the presence and burial of Jesus in Kashmir. These include, *The Fifth Gospel* and *In Search of Historical Jesus* by Professor Fida Hassnain; *Jesus died in India* by Faber-Kaiser; and *Jesus Lived in India* by Holger Kersten. There are other sources such as the controversial book, *Unknown Life of Christ* written by the Russian explorer Nicholas Notovitch about the Hemis Manuscript in 1889; *Jesus in Heaven on Earth* by Khawaja Nazir Ahmed of Woking Muslim Mission, UK, and a number of references in the *Bhawishya Maha Purana* and Kalhana's *Raj Tarangini*. This is an interesting subject for research.

Among the Gujars in Kashmir there are some who claim to be descendants of Bani Israel. The tribes of Pakhtoons living in Gutlibagh near Ganderbal also claim to be descendants of Moses. There are striking similarities to the etymologies of Kashmiri place names and those found in the *Torah* and the *Book of Chronicles*. There are two important objects in Kashmir claimed to be of Jewish origin. The first is the Staff of Moses, which is claimed by some to be among the relics held at the shrine of a Sufi saint in Char Sharif, and by some in the cave shrine at Aisha Madam. The other is the Ka Ka Pal stone in a temple at Bijbehara.

If we take Kashmiris to have a Jewish origin then one of the most important characteristic they have inherited is the God's curse on Bani Israel. The Holy Quran describes in

detail the doings of Bani Israel. Their greed, their impatience, their betrayal of Prophets sent to them from time to time, their insolence, and their backsliding on the Covenants they had with God is detailed in *Sura Baqara*. Moses conveys to them God's command to sacrifice a Heifer but they send him back asking for colour, type, and age etc. of the Heifer.

Finally they agree to the sacrifice but not with goodwill. God curses Bani Israel for their insolence and ordains that they will wander from place to place. Kashmiris are facing a similar fate.

The extent of suffering they have undergone in the last four centuries, as well as their present condition, makes one think that God's curse is upon them! They are totally enmeshed in a vicious circle of suffering without any chance of escape. In spite of this they do not mend their ways. Walter Lawrence in *The Valley of Kashmir* has described in detail the character and disposition of Kashmiris. "The Kashmiri bears an evil reputation in the Punjab, and indeed throughout Asia. Proverbs liken him to a snake in his morals, and to a fowl in his manners, and men are warned against admitting a Kashmiri to their friendship."

Moorcroft, Hugely, Drew, and Barnes describe them as "Selfish, superstitious, ignorant, supple, intriguing, dishonest, false-tongued, ready with a lie, and given to various forms of 'deceit'". Moorcroft, however, admits that the vices of Kashmiris are not innate, but are due to the government under which they lived. These vices are the effects of his political condition rather than his nature." Walter Lawrence concedes that in a country where there was practically no justice, the only weapon in the hands of the weak was lying or subterfuge. He states that two national features of their character are lying and envy or malice. "A Kashmiri cannot see any one getting on in life." However, detailing the good qualities, Walter Lawrence writes, "Kashmiris

possess an individuality, and a national character which will cling to them wherever they go. Kashmiris are fond of their own country, its food, its water, and its dress.... Finally, though the character of a Kashmiri leaves much to be desired, I think that it is to their credit that it is not worse, considering the few chances they have had for becoming truthful, manly, and self-respecting. A man who can be beaten and robbed by any one with a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself and his fellow-men, and it is useless to look for the virtues of a free people among the Kashmiris, and unfair to twit them with absence of such virtues. The Kashmiri is what his rulers have made him, but I believe and hope that two generations of a just and strong rule will transform him into a useful, intelligent, and fairly honest man."

Had Walter Lawrence been alive today, he would have been shocked to see the condition of Kashmiris who have had no chance to breathe and grow in the freedom he had envisaged for their transformation. They are stuck in a much worse condition! This is possible only because of some curse. Will this curse ever lift from us? Not until we mend our ways!

This book is an attempt to put together briefly some parts of this tragic story for our younger generations who have been intentionally deprived of our history, both ancient and recent. It is a collection of some of the essays which have appeared as a regular column titled '*Kashmir First*', in the local English daily of Srinagar, '*Greater Kashmir*'.

2.

THE ORIGIN OF KASHMIRIS

There are many theories about the origin of Kashmiris. It is one of the most mysterious and exciting topics. Some say we are descendants of Aryans who came from Central Asia. There is a fantastic theory which says that we may be part of the lost tribes of Israelites who came here through Iran and Afghanistan. However, one can say with certainty that we are not in any way very close to other inhabitants of the sub-continent especially those living in our southern neighbourhood.

Physically we are of a fine stock, well built and tall. We have sharp and regular features. Generally Kashmiri people are lively and intelligent. Full of fun and fond of amusement. The beauty of our women has been well known and praised by writers and poets for a long time. We do look like an ancient race with complexions varying from very fair to ruddy and sometimes even blond. In Europe as well as in many other countries we are mistaken for Turks or Iranians or Greeks and in some cases as Spanish or Italians. Raj Tarangini describes original inhabitants of the valley as Pisacas and Nagas who used to create trouble for Brahmans. Kashmiri Brahmans are popularly called Pandits and form a distinct class of their own. They can be considered the purest specimen of the ancient Aryan settlers in the valley. However, it is not fully established where — — they came

from and what route they came by. Raj Tarangini also mentions that the valley was once a big lake (Sati Sar) which was drained by Kashyapa after he killed the Demon Jalodbhava, who was guarding the outlet in Baramulla.

Well, the Geological formation of Karewas, layers of sedimentary clay deposits, found everywhere in the valley, does confirm the existence of a lake. However, the exact origin of the people of Kashmir is not fully established and could be an interesting subject for research.

It is not known whether any anthropological or any DNA study of Kashmiris has ever been attempted. There is only one definite and irrefutable scientific evidence about the beginning of human civilization in Kashmir, and that is the Neolithic (New Stone Age) dwelling sites in many parts of the valley. The Burzahom site is the most studied and well known in the scientific community. But the significance of the site is not well known among the people at large. Burzahom Neolithic Site is on a Karewa in the neighbourhood of Shalimar-Telbal road. It has a beautiful location. On one side in the distance is Dal Lake; while in the backdrop is Mahadev Peak. The site is famous because it was the first such site discovered in Kashmir. It has dwelling pits, burial pits and some megaliths. The Neolithic (or the New Stone Age) period of this site dates back to around 3,000 BC.

In a way the place represents the site and the period during which the first inhabitants of our beautiful valley came. They could be termed the original Kashmiris who started inhabiting this valley like their counter parts in many other areas of the world. I visited the site first in 1969 when it had been freshly excavated. The then Chief Minister, the late G.M.Sadiq, had informed me about the discovery of this and other sites. He had been in its excavation and was desirous

of having a museum on the site itself to house the various implements discovered there.

In an informal chat he mentioned to me that he was very much apprehensive that everything discovered here would be taken to the National Museum in Delhi and we would be left with pits only! Because of this fear he had sanctioned construction of a museum on the site itself. On visiting the site again a few years after his death, his words proved prophetic. There was nothing at the site except some pits full of rain water and half complete concrete pillars erected to provide a roof over these. Everything had been taken to Delhi! Subsequently a number of other sites were discovered and excavated.

The Burzahom site was excavated from 1961 to 1968. Many implements of the Neolithic period dating back to 3,000 BC were discovered in this site. It also yielded ten human skeletons. During the Neolithic Age man started using sharpened stone tools with smooth surface achieved by grinding. They started relying more and more on getting their food by growing crops and domesticating animals. They also began making pottery. A few pieces of pottery were also recovered from this site. Burzhom in Kashmiri means 'home of birch'. It seems that there were a lot of birch trees in this area during that period. This has been confirmed by pieces of burnt birch recovered from here. From this site a stone slab with a hunting scene was also recovered.

The other places where similar sites were discovered are Begagund, Gofkral, Hariparigom, Olchibag, Pampur, Panzgom, Sombur, Waztal and Brah. Details of the excavation with illustrations can be seen on the website of 'Discover India' where Mr. Upinder Singh has written a detailed article with illustrations by Gautam Trivedi.

As already mentioned the site also yielded ten human skeletons. Out of these five are of adult males, three are of

adult females, and one is of a juvenile and one of a child. These skeletons were examined in detail by anthropologists. One of the skeletons is of a female of 26 to 30 years which has a trepanated or trephined skull. The trepanated skull was first noticed by Allchin and Allchin but was later studied in detail by Roy Chowdhury and Basu and Pal. Trepanation is an ancient surgical practice of drilling or cutting holes through the skull vault of a living or recently many ancient societies of Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. This clearly establishes that even this ancient Stone Age community of Kashmiris was quite advanced in the scientific knowledge and medical practices of ancient times. They probably used surgical instruments made of bronze and the procedure may have been undertaken by a surgeon from Indus Valley where it was more prevalent.

Subsequently the Neolithic dwellers of Kashmir got mixed with a number of waves of Aryans, Scythians, and probably Israelites to evolve into present day Kashmiris. The external rule of Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, and Dogras also influenced the lives of local people. However, due to our resilience and adaptability we have absorbed all strains and streams and have still stayed as Kashmiris.

In many other places in the world where different cultures have come together, one finds specific localities or areas belonging to these varied ethnic groups such as China

Town, Greek, or Latin Quarter etc. However, in Kashmir we do not have any such isolated quarter. We have assimilated all cultures and ethnic groups which came here and yet have maintained our age old traditions and customs. This extraordinary quality of the Kashmiri people to face all inroads and external pressures from different quarters and yet retain the centuries old identity in the most difficult and trying conditions distinguishes us as a truly ancient race.

3.

KASHMIR IN ANCIENT CHRONICLES

Sir Aurel Stein in the second part of his translation of Kalhana's *Raj Tarangni* has given a detailed memoir on the ancient geography of Kashmir. It makes a wonderful reading and transports one mentally to the glory that Kashmir was! The most interesting and absorbing account is about relating the present day place names and existing ruins of buildings to their ancient origin, along with descriptions given in various chapters of the main chronicle. One is struck by the accuracy of Kalhana's narrative regarding the topographical location of various sites. This has been meticulously verified by Sir Aurel Stein.

While going through these accounts one comes to a chapter on the mention of Kashmir in ancient chronicles titled '*Accounts of Old Kashmir*'. It makes a fascinating reading. The first references are from Greek sources. One would have expected that the records of Alexander's invasion would definitely include mention of Kashmir as his armies passed in the vicinity of the valley. However, Kashmir is conspicuously absent from these records. On the contrary it is the Ptolemy's *Geography* which has preserved the references to Kashmir. He calls the region KASPEIRA

which is supposed to enclose a large portion of land including parts of Punjab, North-West Provinces, and Central India. This may be related to the period when the power of the dynasty ruling Kashmir extended far beyond its borders.

The importance of this reference lies in the name of the territory as it is a phonetic derivative between Kasmira, the ancient Sanskrit name of Kashmir, and the present day Kashmir or Kashir. Another curious notice is in the poem '*Bassarika of Dionysius of Samos*'. It mentions about KASPEIROI, a tribe famous among all Indians for their fast feet. Even Alberuni has mentioned about Kashmiris being good pedestrians. It is but natural that people living in high alpine valleys would have a habit of long foot marches. Raj Tarangni has given many examples of very respectable marching performances of ancient Kashmiris. The flight of King Bhoja across the peaks and glaciers of the Haramukh Range is a classic example of this marching prowess. Even Herodotus, who is known as the 'father of history', mentions KASPATYROS, which is taken by some as a reference to Kashmir.

However, this has not been authenticated or conclusively proved. After the Greeks is the mention of Kashmir in Chinese records. Buddhist pilgrims from China on their way to sacred sites on the Indian plains travelled through Kashmir and chose it as a resting place. The earliest reference to Kashmir dates back to A.D. 541. This relates to the arrival of an Indian Envoy in China during the early part of the reign of the Tang dynasty. Kashmir is described as a country 'enveloped on all sides like a precious jewel by the snowy mountains, with a valley in the south which leads up to it and serves as a gate of the Kingdom'. Almost all other Chinese accounts of Kashmir give a similar description.

Ninety years after this first mention of Kashmir in Chinese records, Hiuen Tsang visited the valley and stayed here as an honoured guest for two years. He entered Kashmir

through the valley of Vitasta (present Jhelum). After crossing over mountains and treading along precipices, he claims to have arrived at a stone gate which was the western entrance of the Kingdom. During his two year stay he studied Sutras and Sastras and acquainted himself fully with the country. He describes Kashmir, which he calls Kia-shi-milo, as a country surrounded on all sides by very high mountains which have very narrow and contracted passes for entry. According to him these natural bulwarks have protected the country from its neighbours who have never succeeded in subduing it.

He describes the climate as cold and snow plentiful. The soil is described as very fertile with an abundance of fruit and flowers. The people are described as light and Frivolous and of a weak and pusillanimous disposition. "The people are handsome in appearance, but they are given to cunning. They love learning and are well instructed". He recalls many conferences with the Kashmiri doctors of the sacred law. The two full years which Hiuen Tsang spent in Kashmir was the longest halt at any place which he made during his sixteen years of travels through India and Central Asia. Probably after crossing through the hot and dusty plains of India the cool and salubrious climate of Kashmir cast its spell on him.

Apart from the earlier Buddhist pilgrims to holy sites in India who halted in Kashmir, the Turki pilgrims from Kashgar, Yarkand, and other parts of Central Asia, whether on their way to Makkah or on their return, never failed to make a long stay in Kashmir. In the recent past the partition of India resulted in total disconnection of Kashmir from its northern neighbours. The next reference to Kashmir in Chinese records relates to the Annals of the Tang dynasty, which mentions the arrival of the first ambassador from Kashmir sent by Candrapida, and then another sent by Muktapida (Lalitaditya) of the Karakot dynasty of

the Raj Tarangni.

In fact, Muktapida had entered into a treaty of military alliance with the rulers of the Tang dynasty of China against Tibet, which he subsequently raided with a strong Kashmirian army. He failed to conquer it as his entire army perished in the cold and high altitude deserts of Ladakh. A few years after the visit of Muktapida's envoy, Kashmir was visited by another Chinese pilgrim, OU-KONG. His account is very important in regard to the routes of ancient Kashmir. He gives very clear description of three great routes through the mountains which, since ancient times have formed the main lines of communication between the valley and the outer world.

In the east the route leads to Tou-fan or Tibet. This is the road going over Zoji La to Ladakh and thence to Tibet. In the north the route leads to Po-liu or Baltistan which is the route to Gilgit through the Upper Kishenganga valley (Gurais and Tilel) and from there to Skardo or Astor on the Indus. The route through the western gate leads to Kien-to-lo, or Gandhara. This is the famous Jhelum Valley road which was always the most frequented and easy entry to the valley. Ou-kong also mentions a fourth route which remained always closed and was opened when an imperial army honoured it with a visit. This is the route over the Pir Pantsal range to the south. In fact this route came into prominence only after the Mughals annexed Kashmir in sixteenth century.

After the Chinese we can examine the references in the accounts of Muslim scholars.

Although the first rush of Arabs into the Indus Valley brought them close to Kashmir, they did not make any attempt to enter it. Even when Islam overspread the whole of Northern India, Kashmir, behind its mountain ramparts, remained safe for many centuries. In spite of this seclusion of Kashmir, the Arabic literature has very accurate and valu-

able account of Kashmir. This is due to the research and critical appraisal of ALBERUNI who travelled with Mahmud of Ghazni up to the borders of Kashmir at the fort of Lohkot (presently Loran in Punch). This stronghold of the Kashmiri forces brought the invasion of Mahmud to a standstill and he had to ultimately retreat from here due to the onset of winter. Though this expedition failed to reach Kashmir it gave Alberuni ample opportunity to collect detailed information on Kashmir. He refers to the pedestrian habits of Kashmiris and mentions that the nobles were carried in palanquins on the shoulders of men. He describes Kashmiris' anxiety and care to protect their country. "They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country, and therefore take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading to it. In consequence it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people".

In ancient Kashmir there was a very efficient system of frontier watch stations known as Davaras and Drangas and the system of rahdari was prevalent till recent times. The head of the frontier watch stations was called the Davara pati. Alberuni's description of the entire country including its weather is very accurate even though he did not enter it.

Compared to all these references in Greek, Chinese and Arabic literature, there is a lamentable lack of exact geographical mention of Kashmir in general Sanskrit literature. Judging from the extreme scantiness of the data, it is clear that Kashmir to them was a country foreign and remote in every way. The name Kasmira is mentioned as the designation of the country and its people but in a very vague fashion. The *Mahabharata* refers in many passages to Kashmiris and their rulers but in a general man-

ner without giving distinct location of the country. The most specific piece of information regarding Kashmir that Sanskrit literature outside the

Valley furnishes is in the term Kasmira or Kasmiraja that designates Saffron and Kustha, for which it was famous since ancient times.

4.

KASHMIR'S NORTHERN CONNECTIONS

'Ancient' Kashmir was historically much better connected with its northern neighbours than the present 'Modern' Kashmir. Some of the main aspects of life which show Central Asian influence are the Kashmiri cuisine and the world famous Kashmir handicrafts. A typical example, which every Kashmiri home can boast of, is the Samovar. Kashmir's most revered King, Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Budshah, is supposed to have spent seven years in the Royal Court of Tamerlane at Samarqand, from where he brought the artisans who introduced the famous handicrafts into Kashmir. These handicrafts were, over a period of time, improved and perfected by the enterprising Kashmiri craftsmen.

Kashmir and Ladakh are situated on one of the branches of the famous Silk-Route. This was a very important and busy trade route since earliest times. Spices and condiments from India would be taken to Central Asian countries through this route and the caravans would return with Silk, Pashmina wool and dry fruit. Srinagar's Kaka Sarai (Inn) was a resting point for some of the caravans from Ladakh as well as Yaqand. There was one more Sarai near Safa Kadal. The caravans would normally use the double

humped Bactrian camels commonly seen in Central Asian deserts. Some of these camels are still in the Nubra valley of Ladakh. Leh was another important halt on this route. The most adventurous and dangerous travels between Leh and Central Asian countries as well as Chinese Turkistan have been beautifully portrayed by Ghulam Rasool Galwan in his book '*Servant of the Sahibs*'. Till the advent of Islam, Kashmir's major religious and social interactions had been with its southern neighbours. These exchanges were mostly with southern parts of India because of the predominant Saivite Hindu religion, which was common to both.

North India, being predominantly Vedanta, had a much lower interaction with Kashmir. However, even during the Hindu period of Kashmir's history, there were many exchanges and interactions with the Chinese. Tibet was a source of disturbance and nuisance for both the countries. Raj Tarangni mentions that there existed a treaty of military alliance between Kashmir's Karakot dynasty and the Tang rulers of China against Tibet. Lalitaditya Muktapid is supposed to have mounted an expedition against Tibet, which proved disastrous, and he lost his entire army en route. Once Kashmir became a Muslim State, the interaction with Central Asian States as well as Chinese Turkistan increased appreciably. Muslim pilgrims from these places used to go for Hajj through Kashmir and would halt for sometime in Srinagar. The greatest exodus of Yaqandis took place in 1949 after the Maoist Revolution in China. Caravan — after caravan — of refugees from Chinese Turkistan descended on Srinagar. Most of these were rich and upper class people called the 'Bourgeoisie' by the Communists. They were the aristocracy of the countries overtaken by the Communists. Most of these settled in colonies near Eid Gah in the old city and lived in penury. Some of the members of the former aristocracy would go begging in Srinagar. However, most of them started small trades. There may be still some Yaqandis selling the 'Nana Kebab'

and other Central Asian Delicacies like the Yaqandi Pulao. Subsequently quite a few of them migrated to a number of foreign countries.

There was also some interaction between Kashmir and Tibet after the Third Buddhist Council of first century AD, when Bhikshus from Kashmir travelled to China and other places with the message of the new Mahayana School of Buddhism. The famous Tibetan Prince Rin Cin Zangpo is supposed to have taken about 100 Muslim artists from the valley to Ladakh and Tibet. The world famous frescoes on the walls of the Alchi Monastery in Ladakh are supposed to have been painted by these Muslim artists from Kashmir. These frescoes are very intricate and beautiful miniatures painted all over the Monastery walls and on the legs of the two storeys high statues of Buddha. These paintings date back to eleventh century AD. There are clear depictions of Kings and Queens, Arabs and other persons showing Muslim influences of the artists.

The other important as well as intriguing journey from Kashmir to Tibet is that of Jesus Christ. This is attributed to a manuscript in Hemis Monastery discovered by a Russian traveller and explorer, Nikolai Notovich in 1889. This story is still a legend and has not been fully established. However, it points to the connection which Kashmir had with these countries in the past. It was supposed to be an easy conduit to the Central Asian States, Chinese Turkistan, and Tibet from the Indian sub-continent. Kashmir's vicinity to the Russian Empire through the Pamirs prompted the British to establish a foothold in Gilgit to keep a check on expansionist designs of the Czars. There is a very strong spiritual link between Kashmir and Central Asia. The Kashmir's patron Saint Shah-i-Hamadan, (Sayed Ali Hamadani) who was the leading light for the spread of Islam in Kashmir is buried in Katlan, in Tajikistan. He had travelled there through Ladakh. A mosque in Shey near Leh

is attributed to him as he is supposed to have halted and prayed there for sometime.

The events of 1947 totally cut off Kashmir from its Northern neighbours. Even Leh, which always had a strong religious connection with Lhasa in Tibet, got completely disconnected. During the last half century Kashmiris have only been exposed to influences from the sub-continent. The Central Asian traits have gone into the background and there has been *Indianisation* and *Punjabisation* of Kashmiris. However, the only lucky people who have continued some interaction with Central Asia and Chinese Turkistan, even though of a limited level, are from the Northern Areas of Pakistan. This is due to the construction of Karakoram highway by the Chinese. People living in those parts do not need a visa to travel to Chinese Turkistan and other places. They get local permits and there is a lot of trade with China through this route.

The first and foremost step to restore Kashmiris ancient and historical character is to get routes to Central Asia and Chinese Turkistan reopened. Similarly Leh should be re-connected to Lhasa (through the ancient route upstream Indus entering Tibet near Demchok. Incidentally, I had visited the famous John Hopkins Institute of Advanced International Studies in Washington during my visit to USA in 1998. I was surprised to know that they had clustered all studies on Kashmir under the Department of Central Asian Studies rather than the Department of South Asian Studies to which I had been referred by some people from outside. They have always been considering Kashmir to be more strongly connected to Central Asia than to South Asia or the Indian sub-continent. May be if Kashmiris are allowed free travel to all their neighbouring countries with whom they have had strong cultural links, the complexion of the whole problem changes. Will peace then return faster? Sometimes

isolating and confining a person to a totally new environment after disconnecting him from his historical past also creates deep psychological problems. A free and open Kashmir could once again become an important hub on the Ancient Silk Route and a meeting point for Central and South Asia.

5.

**BEYOND THE DA VINCI CODE-
KASHMIR'S BIBLICAL CONNECTION**

Kashmir has many popular myths and legends that are mysterious, intriguing, and sometimes controversial. One of the most talked about in recent times is the existence of a tomb at Rozabal, Khanyar that is supposed to be final resting place of Jesus Christ. There are two aspects to this legend. First is about the coming of Jesus Christ to Kashmir after the resurrection, and then preaching here till his natural death and subsequent burial. The other is the migration and ultimate settlement of some of the lost tribes of Israelites in Kashmir after having travelled through Afghanistan.

Prof.Dr.Fida Mohammad Hassnain has written two books, the '*Fifth Gospel*' and '*In Search of Historical Jesus*' on the subject. The books are the result of extensive research conducted by Professor .Hassnain over a period of time. Khawaja Nazir Ahmad of Woking Muslim Mission (England) wrote a book titled, '*Jesus in Heaven on Earth*'. Faber Kaiser published his book in Germany. One of the recent ones is '*Jesus Lived in India*' by Holger Kersten. Apart from these, there are dozens of other books, research papers, documentary films on both the subjects, the Jesus tomb and the Israeli origin of Kashmiris. All these

theories are based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross. This theory has received a tremendous boost after the publication of the novel, *'The DA VINCI CODE'* (the New York Times Bestseller) by Dan Brown.

The Kashmir connection begins from the Hemis Monastery in Leh, Ladakh. In 1887, Russian historian and scholar, Nicolai Notovich visited Ladakh and discovered a manuscript written in Tibetan which described the complete life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Notovich got the manuscript translated with the help of some friendly lamas. On his return to Europe, he tried to get it published but no one was prepared to do it. Finally, he succeeded in getting it published in Paris in 1894 in book form under the title *'Unknown Life of Saint Issa'*. The publication of the book raised a storm in the entire Christian world. It was labelled blasphemy. Many missions were sent to Hemis to verify the existence of the manuscript. Even the Vatican got interested. Many attempts were made to totally deny the existence of the manuscript. Notovich was alleged to be a fraud. Even his visit to Ladakh was refuted. However, there were many other witnesses who had seen these writings before and after Notovich.

Others who had seen or written about the manuscript include Nicolas Roerich, Madame Elisabeth Caspari, Lady Henrietta Merrick, and Swami Abhedananda. Lady Henrietta Merrick in her book, *'In the World's Attic'*, published in 1931, writes, "In Leh is the legend of Christ who is called *Issa*, and it is said that the monastery at Hemis holds precious documents fifteen hundred years old, which tell of the days he passed in Leh where he was joyously received and where he preached". The manuscript has never been seen after that.

In 1998, I accompanied two friends from London, Peter Montagnon of BBC and John Purdie of Channel 4 to Ladakh. We met all the senior lamas with the intention of having a

look on the manuscript in Hemis. We were informed that all important manuscripts and relics are in a sealed chamber and cannot be opened as the head lama is in Tibet. He had gone there for studies. When the Chinese occupied Tibet, he got stuck there. Peter flew to Tibet twice to meet the head lama to persuade him for the opening of the sealed chamber to allow us to verify the existence of the manuscript. But we did not succeed and the most controversial and explosive piece of evidence remains sealed till this day. It is hoped someday it may see the light of day.

It is said that Jesus had travelled with caravans before the age of 12 to India and Tibet. He preached at Varanasi and then proceeded to Tibet through Kashmir and Ladakh. Christianity is supposed to be influenced by Buddhism to a great extent. There is no record of the life of Jesus between the ages of 12 and 30. It is further said that the tribe of Essenes who were close to Jesus had given him some herbs, which put him in a death like trance on the cross. He was presumed dead and taken off the cross. The Essenes revived him and he travelled with Mary Magdalene to Kashmir where he died a natural death. These are conjectures and theories without any scientific basis.

A number of persons including famous fiction writer Von Daniken have visited Rozabal to verify the truth but without any success. No one has succeeded in confirming the truth of these theories due to many local constraints and inhibitions.

The other historical tomb supposed to exist in Kashmir is that of Moses. The Bible names five landmarks in relation to Moses' burial site: the Plains of Moab, Mount Nebo, the peak of Pisgah, Beth-Peor, and Heshbon. All the five named landmarks are to be found in one well-defined location near Auth Wattu, Bandipore. There are many names of places beginning or ending with Musa (Moses) in different parts of the valley, such as Muqam-i-Musa, Sang-i-Musa, Musa

Marg and so on. There is supposed to be a staff of Moses in the cave at Aish Muqam. All these legends seem quite intriguing but lack scientific basis and are without any verification. These depend upon local beliefs and references in ancient books and travelogues. These need to be checked and verified by modern scientific methods as has been done in case of similar historical finds relating to Pharaohs of Egypt.

Next comes the second important Biblical connection of the Kashmiri people to Israelites. This can be easily established through the use of modern scientific research tools. It is said that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the twelve tribes of Israelites were dispersed all over the world. Some of these tribes have been traced to different locations. In fact, remnants of one of the tribes were recently confirmed to be in Mizoram (India) by DNA testing. Some of the members of this tribe are now planning to migrate to Israel. There is a theory that one of the tribes came to Kashmir through Afghanistan and settled here. Kashmir was originally inhabited by Nagas and Pisacas who must have been here from the Neolithic age (new Stone Age). Dwelling pits from the Neolithic age have been discovered at Burz Hom and other places in the valley. Kalhana mentions these original inhabitants in *Raj Tarangni*.

There is also mention of Mlecchas entering Kashmir off and on. These Mlecchas were probably Israelites. It is said that in ancient Kashmir, the inhabitants of the valley did not allow outsiders to enter. The only exception was the Israelites who were allowed to enter in small numbers.

There are many similarities between Jews and Kashmiris. The Hebrew word Kasher or Kashir, or in English, Kosher, means acceptable, especially in relation to food. Kashmiris still call their country Kashir and its inhabitants Kashur. More than 300 names of geographical features, of towns, regions and estates, and of tribes, clans, families

and individuals in the Old Testament can be matched with linguistically related or phonetically similar names in Kashmir and its environs. Examples are Amal, Bal, Gabba, Gani, Ajas, Aror, Behatpoor, Harwan and so on. The present temple of Shankaracharya was originally known as Takht-i-Suleiman, the '*Throne of Solomon*'.

According to an inscription, the new temple was restored in AD 78 by King Gopadatta (also called Gopananda) on the foundations of an older, ruined building. Tradition has it that Solomon once visited the region. According to Holger Kersten, "the Kashmiris are different in every respect from other peoples in India. Their way of life, their behaviour, their morals, their character, their language, customs and habits are all of a type that might be described as typically Israelite. Like present-day Israelis, the Kashmiris do not use fat for frying and baking; they only use oil. Most Kashmiris eat smoked fish called fari, which is eaten by Israelis in remembrance of the time before their Exodus from Egypt. Butchers' knives in Kashmir are in half-moon shape typical of the Israelites, and even the rudders and paddles of the boat people (Hanjis) are of the similarly typical heart shape. The men wear distinctive skull-caps on their heads. The clothing of the old women of Kashmir (Pandtanis) is very similar to that of Jewish women, and like them they also wear headscarves and laces. Married Pandit women wear '*Deiji Hor*', which is also worn by Jewish women. Like young Jewish girls, the girls of Kashmir dance in two facing columns with linked arms, moving together forwards and backwards to the rhythm. They call their songs rof. After bearing a child, woman of Kashmir observes forty days seclusion for purification; this, too, is a Jewish custom. Many of the older graves in Kashmir are aligned in east-west orientation, while as Islamic graves normally point north-south."

In addition to what has been stated above from the book

of Holger Kersten, there are many other similarities. Kashmiri bread, *tsochiwor*, is a typical Jewish bagle.

In most of the Kashmiri shrines at the entrance there is a round metallic bell with chains that is also seen in Jewish synagogues. Most of the shrines are similar to those in Israel and usually located on hilltops or higher ground. Kashmiri Pheran is a typical Jewish Robe. During the last few years, a large number of Israeli tourists have been visiting Kashmir. Once, I asked a Professor from Tel Aviv University why are so many Israelis were coming to Kashmir? He answered that while travelling all over India, the only place were they feel attracted and at home is Kashmir.

All these similarities are very intriguing and definitely merit a full-fledged scientific inquiry. There has been extensive coverage of these legends and fanciful stories through the media but now is the right time to bring out the truth by using modern scientific tools such as Anthropological measurements and DNA testing. It would be an ideal subject for research by the concerned department of the University of Kashmir. Collaboration or assistance from some foreign universities should be easily forthcoming. Let us hope some of our scholars take an early initiative and start such a project. Confirmation of the existence of some of these relics will start a flood of western tourists to Kashmir.

6.

HOW OLD IS THE KASHMIR PROBLEM?

There is a lot of confusion about the nature as well as the age of the '*Kashmir Problem*'. What is the '*Problem*' and how old is it? These are very pertinent questions about which there are numerous view points and theories. Before getting into the crux of the '*Problem*', it would be useful to decide its age. Is the '*Problem*' 16 years or 60 years or 421 years old? These days many people claim that the present problem started in 1990 and there has been a situation of turmoil for last 16 years or so. Before that time things were absolutely normal. It is debatable whether the superficial '*normalcy*' divested from the underlying perennial political problem can be termed as '*normalcy*'-

It is true that the present uncertain situation resulted from the happenings of 1990 but it was an upheaval, one among a series which Kashmir has been witnessing since 1931. It was not the real origin of the main problem. Similar upheavals have occurred in 1931, (13th July assault on the central jail), 1946, (Quit Kashmir movement), 1953, (ouster of Sheikh Abdullah), and 1963, (holy relic agitation). Even though all these uprisings had some specific immediate provocations or reasons, yet the main underlying cause has been the lingering political problem. These

events can be termed as the symptoms and not the disease, which is much older. It is like a dormant volcano, which is always simmering beneath the Earth's crust and suddenly erupts without any warning from time to time.

India and Pakistan as well as the world at large, including United Nations Security Council, which has the Kashmir dispute still on its agenda, consider 1947 as the date of birth of this tragedy. This is in fact the date for the start of Indo-Pak problems, which resulted from the partition of the sub-continent.

Kashmir, because of the misfortune of its inhabitants, got entangled in this mess like a Gordian knot. An ideological divide between the two neighbouring countries got manifested in the so called 'Kashmir Dispute'. The real '*Kashmir Problem*' pertaining to the local inhabitants got relegated to the background. For these contending parties the problem is only 60 years old, a legacy of the British colonial rule that gave the wound and ensured that it remains incurable. As long as the two countries take the British view and consider the problem to have arisen in 1947, they will never be able to solve it. It is a manifestation of their conflicting ideologies of 'Two Nation Theory' and 'Secularism'.

Their — other problems will get sorted out once they genuinely and honestly reconcile to the creation of two independent countries. They have to accept the reality that these countries have come to exist as independent entities and cannot be undone regardless of the basic cause of their creation. But the '*Problem*' of Kashmiris will still remain there. It is neither 16 years old nor 60 years old but goes back 421 years. These days Kashmiris observe 27th October as a black day because Indian forces landed in Kashmir on this day in 1947. However, they seem to have forgotten that the worst day in their history was 14th October, 1586 when the Mughal forces finally entered Srinagar in triumph after having been defeated twice be-

fore by Kashmiri forces led by the last sovereign ruler Yousaf Shah Chak. This triumph was achieved by Mughals through treachery. It was the real black day when Kashmir ceased to exist as an Independent Sovereign State and became a province of the Mughal Empire.

Yousaf Shah's son Yaqub Shah and another scion of the dynasty, Shams Chak, resisted Mughals for a long time after the capture of Srinagar. They fought a relentless guerrilla war against the Mughal forces but could not stand against the power of the mighty Empire and with their defeat Kashmir's fate was sealed for ever. The Kashmiri psyche has been mourning sub-consciously for generations the loss of its sovereignty in the sixteenth century.

The first thing the Mughals did was to drain out the last drop of martial blood from Kashmiris. Systematically they liquidated all the pockets of resistance and ensured that there was no chance of a future rebellion. The Mughal Governors Mirza Yousaf Khan Rizvi and Quli Khan extinguished the last live embers of rebellion among the scions of Chak dynasty and influential nobles. The people in general, though having peaceful times, did not take easily to over lordship of Imperial Mughals. Quli Khan hence adopted a policy of ruthless suppression of unruly elements and the conciliation of peace-loving subjects, a policy which continues to be followed even in present day Kashmir.

The Chaks who had not reconciled to Akbar's over lordship were special targets of his punishment. He did not spare even Shams Chak and Hussain. Chak's daughters had been taken in marriage by Akbar and Salim. On their showing signs of unrest and rebellion, he had them beheaded by the soldiers of Mulla Jamil. Yaqub Shah surrendered only in 1589 on Akbar's first visit to the valley. He was sent to Bihar and poisoned through betel leaves by Qasim Khan. He died in Behira in Bihar in 1593 and was buried in Biswak, Patna district, near the grave of his father Yusuf Shah,

who had died here earlier in exile in September, 1592, pinning for his beloved wife, Habba Khatun. Thus the end of the last ruling dynasty of Kashmir has been very sad and tragic. Sheikh Abdullah visited these historical graves in Bihar and had planned to bring their mortal remains here but for some unknown reasons this could not be done.

Mughals were followed by Afghans who annexed Kashmir in 1753 and ruled it for 67 years. Their rule reduced the country to the lowest depths of penury, degradation, and slavery. All the beauty and nobleness, for which Kashmir and its people were famous, were wiped off under their rule. Heavy taxes and exactions were imposed on the people. One of the Governors, Haji Karim Dad Khan, committed the basest acts on Kashmiri people. The rich had to pay a tax called 'Nazarana' which was four to six times their income. Most of them after selling their properties ran out of the country. The traders had to pay 'Zari Ashkhas', a levy on goods imported into or exported out of the valley. The farmers had to pay an enormous tax on their produce. The shawl weavers had to pay 'Dag Shawl' an excise tax on shawls which subsequently became so heavy that poor shawl weavers preferred death to the weaver's profession. The worst was the smoke money or 'Zari Dood' charged on the Pandit community. The Pandit community was falsely charged with the murdering of some tax collectors. Their leading members were confined in a house and subjected to smoke of burning cow dung. To escape this fate the tax of 'Zari Dood' or smoke money amounting to Rs. 50,000 per year was levied on them.

After Afghans came Sikhs who ruled Kashmir for 27 years, from 1819 when Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered it, till 1846 when it was sold by the British to the Dogras. According to Francis Younghusband, "The Sikhs who succeeded Afghans were not so barbitically cruel, but were hard and rough masters". Being far removed from Lahore,

the capital of the Sikh Empire, the governors were able to fleece the people with impunity. Having faced a lot of trouble from Muslims in the Punjab, the Sikhs were very harsh and tough with Kashmiri Muslims so as to check emergence of any type of Muslim opposition in the valley. They locked the Jama Masjid and had even planned to blow up the Shah Hamadan mosque which was alleged to have been built over a Hindu temple.

It was because of the intervention of Birbal Dhar, an influential noble of that time, that the mosque was saved. However, a number of other mosques including Pathar Masjid were declared by them as state property. The life of a Kashmiri under Sikh rule was the cheapest commodity. According to Moorcraft, "The murder of a native by a Sikh is punished by a fine to the Government of from sixteen to twenty rupees, of which four rupees are paid to the family of the deceased if a Hindu, and two rupees if a Mohamman".

If a Kashmiri killed a Sikh, he would be hanged. The practice of Begar (forced unpaid labour), was continued by the Sikhs with greater vigour. Besides realising revenue, the Sikhs imposed heavy taxation, the effect of which was the impoverishment of the people which forced a large number of them to leave the country. The general standard of life under Sikhs was extremely low. The dress of the people, their houses, and almost every article of necessity were of the lowest possible standard. Both men and women wore a long robe (Phiran) of coarse cloth called Pattu. This garment was very rarely washed and formed both the winter as well as summer dress. A good number of people could not even afford this and went about in tattered and dirty rags.

By the time the Dogras came into picture, Kashmiris had all self respect and dignity totally drained out of them and were probably the poorest wretches on this planet.

They did not even make an attempt to resist their sale, lock, stock, and barrel by the British for a paltry some of rupees seventy five lakhs (Nanukshahee), and few Pashmina goats, horses, and shawls! The Dogra rulers clubbed together different territories through armed conquest to form the present State of Jammu & Kashmir. Historically Kashmir has been the valley with its peripheral districts.

During the Dogra rule, even though the conditions were not as barbaric as under the Afghans and Sikhs, yet the masses in general continued as serfs of the lowest order. Most of the administrators were either non-Kashmiri landlords or Pandits. They owned huge landed estates and locals were working as tenants/tillers. A good part of their produce was taken by the state and the land owners. These poor wretches were under heavy debts with the local Pandit moneylenders. The only ruler who felt some pity on the local people was the last Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh who enacted the state subject law in 1927 to safeguard their interests against exploitation by outsiders.

This law is still in existence though there are quite a few loop holes which have been exploited by interested parties to subvert it from time to time. It is one of the most contentious issues of the present set up as it debars even the President of India from purchasing land in Kashmir!

Apart from the tortuous exactions of the rulers for over four centuries, the Kashmiris faced numerous natural calamities in the form of famines caused by droughts and floods, earthquakes and epidemics which resulted in large scale migrations. The ones left behind were further insensitized to the extent that they totally forgot the finer qualities of life. They had only one purpose in life, to survive against all odds, which they did. Thus the problem in Kashmir is not of territory but of the people who had been subjugated to the worst possible level. In their sub-

conscious mind they yearn to regain their rightful existence as true human beings with self-respect and dignity. Kashmiri's subjugation is like the bondage of Israelites in Egypt. After generations of slavery they got a deliverer in the shape of Prophet Moses who led them to freedom out of Egypt. Similarly, after centuries of subjugation, Kashmiris also got a deliverer in 1931 but unfortunately he got confused and could not overcome human weaknesses. Almost at the brink of emancipation they got entangled in the most complex situation of conflict out of which there seems to be no escape. There has been deterioration in the price of a Kashmiri. In the Sikh period he was valued at rupees sixteen to twenty and now he is worth a lakh of rupees or so. Taking into account the depreciation of the rupee, the twenty rupees of Sikh period would be more than rupees ten lakhs in present time.

A plot of land which was worth rupees five hundred about forty years back is valued at rupees forty lakhs or so at present. Two neighbouring countries are fighting each other over a piece of territory called Kashmir. Off and on they do mention the Kashmiri people but in actual practice they still do not figure anywhere in the negotiation process. It is time for both countries to give up the notion of Kashmir being a 'territorial dispute' and consider it as a 'human' problem which has been here for centuries. They must study the problem in its centuries old historical perspective from a human angle and alleviate the sufferings of the people.

The other freedom loving nations of the world must also realise the basic causes underlying this explosive 'human' problem and implore the two countries to address it in earnest by involving the local people as the first priority. The European Union washed off its hands simply by terming it as the 'most beautiful prison' in the world but took no practical steps to get its inmates released. Everyone must concede the fact that the Kashmiris want to be free

and lead a life of self-respect and dignity like all other free nations of the world. The Governments and the people of the two neighbouring countries must understand this situation if the 'problem' is to be resolved. At the present moment they are only patronising and promoting the 'beneficiaries of conflict' whose sole interest is to prolong the 'problem' at all costs.

Unfortunately the main human issue gets swept under the cacophony of 'National interest', 'Security reasons', 'Strategic considerations,' sub-continental as well as global, and the local people facing all the music continue to live with an uncertain future which is not only killing them physically but psychologically. There is a limit to their patience which almost borders on passivity. The magma under the earth's crust is simmering and building up pressure for another volcanic eruption. However, the new eruption may not be limited to Kashmir only but may prove to be the beginning of Armageddon.

7.

DELHI AND ISLAMABAD'S BLUNDERS IN KASHMIR

Kashmir's relationship with Delhi as well as Islamabad has seen many ups and downs during last half century. However, at the present moment the alienation with both is at its worst in the entire history of this relationship. This is because of the repeated blunders committed both by Delhi as well as Islamabad in handling Kashmir from time to time. They have been trying to manage the problem rather than solve it. The greatest blunder is that the rulers in the two countries have been listening only to the advice provided by their intelligence agencies and have acted upon it from time to time with disastrous results. They have not bothered to take inputs from political leaders, intellectuals, and representatives from the cross section of the society.

Let us first take Delhi's blunders. The first blunder was the advice to Maharaja Hari Singh to change his Prime Minister, Ram Chand Kak, who had been personally inclined towards total independence of Kashmir. In fact, Maharaja Hari Singh himself was undecided about the best choice before him. He knew that even though he was a Hindu ruler yet he had Muslim majority population for whom he had great love and sympathy. It was the Maharaja who had

enacted the State Subject Law in 1927 to protect the poor Kashmiris from exploitation by outsiders.

In order to take a well thought out decision about the ultimate fate of his State at the time of partition, he had offered signing of a stand still agreement with both countries. Pakistan had immediately signed it but Delhi had asked more time to consider it. The second blunder was to force Maharaja's hand in regard to state's accession. At the time of Tribal invasion, which had followed the revolt by Maharaja's troops in Poonch, led by Sardar Ibrahim, the Maharaja had asked Delhi for assistance to save his state. However, Lord Mountbatten had replied that the state had to first accede to India before any assistance could be given. Why? Could the assistance not have been given without pressurizing Maharaja to accede to India? If Delhi had not forced the accession, the Maharaja might have reached an agreement with his subjects and continued to rule as a titular head with a popular democratic government and Pakistan would have been the real aggressor.

Once the invasion had been halted and a cease-fire enforced, Sheikh Abdullah, who headed the local Government, tried his best to convince people that a semi-independent Kashmir was the best choice for them. He was not allowed to do so. Circumstances were created to turn him against India. B.N. Mullick, the former Director of Intelligence Bureau mentions in his memoirs that it took him two years to convince Nehru that to achieve Kashmir's total integration with India, Sheikh Abdullah had to be removed from the scene. An agitation in Jammu was engineered through Parija Parishad under the banner of 'Ek Nishan, Ek Vidhan, and Ek Pradhan'. Sheikh Abdullah tried to suppress this agitation with a strong hand. The entire Indian press was against him and there was uproar in the whole country. Sheikh Abdullah suddenly realised that for more than six years he had suppressed

all pro Pak sentiment in the valley through ruthless and draconian measures but there was hardly a whisper in the Indian press! This convinced him that India was not a truly secular state as claimed by Gandhi and Nehru and he had made a mistake.

He made a hard-hitting speech against India at Ranbir Singh Pora in Jammu stating that Kashmiris had yet to decide their future and the accession was temporary. Taking this and his meetings with Adlai Stevenson as the excuse, Delhi removed him from the 'scene'.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, who was installed as Prime Minister, tried both the carrot and the stick to bring Kashmiris round to Indian position but failed. This was demonstrated by the Holy Relic upheaval in December 1963, which removed the entire Bakshi clan from the 'scene'. Nehru realised the mistake of having removed his friend from the scene and tried to make amends for it. Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison and sent to Pakistan (on a passport issued with the declaration that he was a Kashmiri Muslim instead of Indian citizen) to meet Ayub Khan to work out a solution for Kashmir. As soon as Sheikh Abdullah, after meeting Ayub Khan, announced in Pakistan that he had succeeded in his mission, Nehru mysteriously died a sudden death. Sheikh Abdullah took a whirlwind tour of some foreign countries and met Chou En Lai in Algiers. Delhi was infuriated at this indulgence. His passport was cancelled. He rushed back and was arrested on arrival in Delhi. He was kept in exile at the south Indian health resort of Kodiakanal in Tamil Nadu. Then came the August 1965 infiltration and subsequent war.

This time Pakistan had sent disciplined regulars of 16 AK Force in civilian clothes. They tried to make it appear as a local uprising but failed due to the reluctance of local political leaders. They had also under-estimated India's response and had probably assessed that the conflict would

remain confined to Kashmir but India went all out for it and crossed the International border in Lahore. Security Council brokered a cease-fire and Russia arranged talks between two sides in Tashkent. Immediately after signing a historic agreement, Lal Bahadur Shastri very mysteriously died in Tashkent itself. G.M.Sadiq who had taken over as the Chief minister, tried to give a clean and efficient governance to Kashmir but his failing health prevented him from achieving this goal and he died during the 1971 war. This war resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh. The result of this war probably convinced Sheikh Abdullah that Pakistan was not in a position to liberate Kashmir. He was also fatigued by a long struggle and was persuaded by Indira Gandhi to come back to the Indian mainstream with a promise of restoration of full autonomy, which had been guaranteed under Article 370 and the Delhi agreement.

He took over the Government of Kashmir in 1975. Again Delhi committed yet one more blunder. Instead of helping Sheikh Abdullah to bring people around to his concept of 'Azadi', they put him on pin pricks and he died a sad person regretting that he had put his people in a total mess from which they seemed to have no escape! Before his death, as a last resort to leave some opening for Kashmiris, he enacted the Resettlement Act, which would enable Kashmiris who had migrated to Pakistan and other places to return to Kashmir and claim their citizenship.

His funeral drew record crowds of over a million people from all over the State. It was a pathetic scene. Some people remarked that his last journey was not performed in correct Islamic manner. He was kept with open face and his feet were towards the grave, which amounts to a dead person being dragged to his grave! Carrying of his coffin from the gun carriage to the burial spot by the uniformed soldiers for lowering of his body by the close relations into the

grave — — created a commotion at the funeral. It was a tragic scene in that the Army, which he had helped to take over Kashmir and subsequently- wanted withdrawn, put him to his final resting place. Farooq Abdullah rose from his father's funeral. People had thought that the son might do something to lessen the burden his father had taken to his grave. But alas Delhi did not give him any chance to do that and pulled the rug from under his feet. He was ultimately forced into a marriage of his nationalist party with the ruling party at Delhi. The greatest blunder ever committed was the rigging of 1987 elections.

Surrender by the Kashmiri nationalist party, National Conference before Delhi left a vacuum, which was filled by the conglomeration of religious and separatist parties under the banner of Muslim United Front, popularly known as MUF. They had decided to project their case in the State Assembly by participating in the democratic process. To achieve this objective, they took part wholeheartedly in the 1987 elections. They may have captured a sizeable number of seats and would have found a strong voice in the State Assembly. Unfortunately as usual Delhi got panicky and the elections were rigged. The winning candidate of MUF from Amira Kadal, Mohammad Yusuf, was arrested and beaten.

His rival Mohiuddin Shah of National Conference was declared elected even though he had lost the election. Mohammad Yusuf now is the Chief of the largest militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen under the name of Salahuddin! After having failed to win their battle through the ballot, the Kashmiri nationalists took to the bullet resulting in the now famous 1990 uprising. All the young men who had been polling agents and candidates of MUF became militant leaders.

One of the many blunders committed by Delhi till 1990 was that most of the central services and organisations in-

cluding intelligence agencies had more than 88% recruitment from Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits). Muslims were never trusted. In 1990, Delhi fell in the Pakistani trap of liquidating Indian intelligence sources in Kashmir and the Governor Jagmohan facilitated the departure of Pandits, who had acted as eyes and ears of Indian intelligence. He probably thought that the nationalist uprising can be given a fundamentalist colour and the field would be left open for eliminating Muslim rebels en masse. He did succeed to some extent but his success suited Pakistan on one hand and on the other totally alienated the Kashmiri Muslims.

After 1996, Gary Saxena was able to rebuild the intelligence apparatus. A large number of militants were turned around and made to surrender. The Army called these 'friendlies'. However, instead of using these to protect and safeguard people by being their saviours, they were turned into their tormentors. They committed all sorts of excesses on the people and got shelter with the Army. State Police also set up a Special Task Force (STF), mostly of non-Kashmiris to tackle militants. This force too became a very infamous organisation dreaded by the people. Gary Saxena, towards the end of his tenure, had also realised that the Kashmir issue was not to be managed but solved. He gave many statements to this effect. Even the Army Chief General Vaidya stated that the Army had done its job in controlling militancy and it was now for politicians to solve the 'Problem'. It has been observed that all Delhi's men who deal with Kashmir ultimately realise that Kashmir needs solution and not management!

After almost virtually losing Kashmir, Delhi was successful in re-installing Farooq Abdullah as the Chief Minister on the premise of a tall promise of return to 1953 position of autonomy. However, as usual he was kept on a tight leash and the Union Cabinet rejected his Resolution on autonomy even without any discussion on it. PDP came to power on

the promise of providing a 'healing touch' to the tormented masses. They promised to abolish STF, send forces back to barracks, end custodial killings, and so on. Delhi never allowed fulfilling of these promises. This ensured the maintenance of the alienation level as high as it was at the peak of militancy.

Delhi's attitude has always been totally colonial. Keep Kashmir with a strong hand no matter what it costs to do so. They swear to fight Pakistan to the last Kashmiri!

'Kashmir is and will remain an integral part of India regardless of what happens to Kashmiris'. However, it is the people who matter and not the land. Instead of reposing total trust in Kashmiris, they continue to rely on Intelligence agencies and the military might. British had to leave India after 200 years. The Empire, on which the Sun never used to set, shrunk back to the British Isles. Hitler even after killing six million Jews could not exterminate them. Violence begets violence. It is a vicious circle.

Let us now analyse the blunders committed by Islamabad. The first blunder was to consider Kashmir a bearer cheque because of its Muslim majority. Those who thought like that were probably unaware of Kashmir's long history of suppression at the hands of foreigners. Kashmiris had suffered both at the hands of Muslims as well as non-Muslims. By nature Kashmiri is neither communal nor fundamentalist.

He is neither a staunch and fanatic Muslim nor is he a rabid Hindu. He is a pure and simple Kashmiri wherever he may be. This is because of the smooth transition of various religions in Kashmir. Hinduism to Buddhism, then return to Hinduism and finally to Islam. None of the changes were violent. These were due to the strength of character of the preachers.

Again Kashmiris suffered under the Mughals, then

under the Afghans, then the worst period was under the Sikhs and finally under the Dogras. During the last period under Dogras, Kashmiris who were very poor and wretched were looked down upon by the Punjabi Muslims. They were given the nickname of 'Hathu'. Even in Maharajas Administration, the outside Muslim Officers would denigrate the Kashmiris and consider them wretched souls. This was one of the main causes, which did not allow Kashmiri intelligentsia to click with the Muslim League leadership. They completely missed a Kashmiris inner psyche.

The second blunder was to send Tribals in support of the Poonch revolt. Pakistan regular army would have done a better job for them. These people instead of acting as saviours of the people turned into marauders and were driven back even after reaching the outskirts of Srinagar.

After the intervention of Security Council invoked by India, there was a ceasefire. Pakistan was able to create a definite region, which they named Azad or Free Kashmir. Here again they committed a blunder but this one was deliberate. Had they been sincere, they would have made Azad Kashmir truly free and independent.

It should have been made a member of the United Nations like Bhutan even though its defence would have remained Pakistan's responsibility. They could have entered into a treaty or a pact with the Kashmiris. Had they done it, India would have failed to retain the other half for long. But Pakistanis demand for Kashmir has been projected as a matter of right to own the State as the unfinished agenda of partition.

Strategically they may be right in demanding it. Both for defence as well as economic security of Pakistan they need Kashmir as a friendly neighbour if not their full-fledged part. All their rivers have sources in Kashmir or

flow down to them from Kashmir. They are completely vulnerable as Kashmir sits on their head. All through these years Pakistan has failed to completely win over Kashmiris. They may appear to be pro-Pakistani but this is only because that country has been the main saviour and sympathiser for Kashmiris in all troubles inflicted on them by India. If China or for that matter Russia had been outspoken to plead Kashmiris cause and soothe their suffering, they would have been pro-China or pro-Russia. On Bhutto's hanging, the only place in the entire sub-continent where there was upheaval against Jamat-i-Islami and violent protests was Kashmir. This was simply because he had declared that he would fight a thousand year war with India to free Kashmiris. They could not imagine that Jamatis who professed to wage Jihad could hang such a person!

The next blunder from Islamabad was the 1965 infiltration. This time Kashmiri regulars forming part of Pakistan Army came in. They had specific tasks and were totally disciplined unlike the tribals of 1947. They tried to cover the intrusion as an uprising but failed. Revolutions can never be exported. Revolutions have to grow in situ on their own. It has been observed that every time a nationalist and patriotic movement starts in Kashmir, it gets scuttled or hi-jacked by Islamabad's actions. Their leaders, Benazir Bhutto as well as Nawaz Sharif, did declare a couple of times that they would support the third option of Kashmiris for total independence if they are given a chance to exercise the right of self determination. However, they had to quickly withdraw their statements due to public pressure. Islamabad wants Kashmir and not Kashmiris. They will fight India for Kashmir till the last Kashmiri! If there is no third option then the right of self-determination loses its meaning. It simply amounts to asking to hand over Kashmir to them, as Kashmiris are not happy with India.

In 1990 when there was the last major uprising in Kash-

mir, Islamabad committed

yet another blunder. There was a massive upsurge of Kashmiri nationalistic feelings. People in millions came out on roads demanding Azadi or freedom. India put down the uprising with a heavy hand. There was a reaction. The Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front started an armed resistance movement. However, the movement soon became fractured into pro-Independence and pro-Pakistan factions. There was violence everywhere. Attempts were made to both communalise as well as criminalise the movement. These succeeded to some extent and gave it a tainted projection globally. The once peaceful land known as Paradise on Earth turned into a virtual hell.

Following this there were two occasions when the two countries reached the brink of total war. The situation was saved only due to intervention of Western Powers led by the USA. Both countries came to realise that violence will not get them anywhere.

They started attempts at coming together with the timely pats from Uncle Sam or Big Brother Bush. A number of CBMs (Confidence Building Measures) were initiated. There has been a ceasefire on the border but violence continues in the valley. Kashmiris continue to live in a state of siege. Innocent people still get killed everyday. Blunders are still made. This is happening because both sides do not trust Kashmiris. They talk about Kashmir without Kashmiris.

The first task of both should to be creating an atmosphere of peace in Kashmir itself. This can be done by withdrawing the draconian legislations, Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Areas Act, removing forces from civilian areas and sending these back to barracks and declaring an internal ceasefire. Both countries should repose complete trust in all the people of Kashmir irrespective of their religion, cast and creed, and should have a dialogue with all sections of society no matter what their

views are. This is the only way forward. Use of force on either side will get us nowhere and will go on adding to the list of blunders. The vicious circle of violence can only be stopped if the two countries genuinely and honestly try to resolve the problem rather than 'manage' it!

8.

IDENTIFYING A KASHMIRI

During last two decades Kashmir has been so much battered physically as well as in the media that a Kashmiri is probably the most well known person through out the world, even though sometimes for wrong reasons. However, there is confusion about who is a Kashmiri and what actually constitutes present Kashmir? Some people even doubt Kashmiris as ever being a nation! It was the partition of the Indian sub-continent and the subsequent conflict between the two emergent countries of Pakistan and India for owning this unfortunate piece of land that put Kashmir on the front page of almost every news paper and news channel through out the world.

Even though in ancient chronicles the land of Kashmir is extensively mentioned by Greek, Chinese, and Arab historians as a beautiful valley deep in the Himalayan mountains, yet not much has been mentioned about the Kashmiris themselves. There are passing references about the peoples' disposition and their habits. Almost all historians have mentioned that Kashmiris are great pedestrians and are given to walking long distances in mountains. Greeks called them a tribe famous all over India for their fast feet. Even Alberuni rates Kashmiris as good

pedestrians. Hiuen Tsang describes Kashmiris in these words, "The people are handsome in appearance, but they are given to cunning. They love learning and are well instructed". All these descriptions do not establish the real origin of Kashmiris. It is the accounts given in Kalhana's Raj Tarangni that take us back a few thousand years.

Burzahom relates us to the Neolithic age and confirms the existence of habitations in Kashmir during the human evolutionary process itself. The other Neolithic discoveries made in different parts of the valley including Gufkral in Tral take our origin to almost 8,000 years back. However, the recent finds of mammoth fossils and tools at Galandar, Pampore, push us almost 400,000 years back. Thus we have been there from the very evolution of the human life on this planet.

However, the unfortunate political conflict has put out a totally confusing picture about Kashmir as well as Kashmiris. There is an urgent need to identify both the real Kashmir as well as a Kashmiri so that the present turmoil does not drown us completely in a sea of conflicting claims and counter claims. The most authentic book of history which, in fact is the earliest recorded history in the entire sub-continent is no doubt Kalhana's Raj Tarangini, written in twelfth century AD. It is the most reliable guide on all aspects of ancient Kashmir. Sir Aurel Stein, the translator of this most valuable document on Kashmir, after extensive research and actual ground verification, has compiled a *Memoir on the Geography of Ancient Kashmir*. Let us examine what Stein has to say about the 'Frontiers of Ancient Kasimr'. He opens the account of the political topography of ancient Kashmir with a survey of its frontiers.

Starting from south east is the valley of KASTHAVATA, the present Kishtwar. It was a separate hill state with predominantly Kashmiri population. Next is the hill district of

BHADRAVAKASA, the Raja ruling it used to be a tributary to Chamba. The Rajas of Chamba often figured in Kashmir chronicles and inter-married with the Lohara dynasty which reigned in Kashmir. To the west of Chamba and south of Bhadravasaka lay the old chiefship of VALLAPURA or the present day Billawar. Between Billawar and Rajapuri (present Rajauri) were many Hindu chieftains. The inhabitants of this region were called Dogras and their country Dugar. Between these two limits on lower hills lived the Thakkuras. The chiefs of the hills immediately south of the Pir Pantsal Range acknowledged their suzerainty to strong Kashmir rulers. The most important hill state in this area was Rajapuri or the present Rajauri. Hiuen Tsang who passed through here mentions that Rajapuri was subject to Kashmir.

Next to Rajauri comes Lohara which included Parontsa or present Punch. The most important valley in this region was that of Lohrin, the route to Tosamaidan which was the shortest access to Kashmir valley. Lohara has played an important part in the history of Kashmir. Alberuni also mentions its importance. Next we come to URASA or present Hazara between Vitasta and Indus. Hiuen Tsang calls this territory Wu-la-shi and according to him it was a tributary to Kashmir. In Muslim period Urasa was also included in the region known as Pakhli and was situated between Kashmir in the east and Indus in the west. This tract is now known as Karnau or by the old name of KARNAHA.

The valley of Kisanganga above its junction with Karnau River and as far as Sardi was known as Drava or Duranda of Kalhana's chronicle and was a dependency of Kashmir. Immediately above Sardi the valley of Kisanganga turns into a narrow gorge and at the end of which is the territory of Dards or the DARADADESA. Drapery, the town of the Darads is modern Gurez. From the head-waters of Kisanganga to those

God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed." The Garden of Eden is stated to be situated between four rivers. Mesopotamia, where the Garden of Eden is usually supposed to exist, has only two rivers as the name of the region implies. Whereas the area around Kashmir has four rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, and Ravi. Thus Kashmir is truly a land between the rivers.

The Bible mentions that the Lord showed Moses the Promised Land but directed him not to enter it. "Go thee unto Mount Nebo and die, but thou shalt not go unto the land which I give to the children of Israel." "The Lord said unto Moses, get thee on top of Mount Pisgah and lift up thine eyes eastward, and northward, westward and southward and behold the Promised Land. The land of milk and honey. The land which drinketh the water of heaven. The land is good and peaceable. The Land where no galley with oars shall go!

According to some legends Moses is buried near Athwattu in the land of Moab (Mowu) opposite Bandipore. This was earlier known as Bethpor, which is a derivative from the Biblical Beth-Peor. The view of the valley from top of the mountain, known locally as Nebo-bal, is as per the description of the Promised Land. Kashmir is locally known as Kashir and a Kashmiri is called a Kosher. Jews call Kosher something acceptable and pure, especially in regard to food. Many explorers and travellers from ancient times have written about the striking resemblance of Kashmir to Biblical lands. It has also been mentioned in many accounts that in ancient times Kashmiris allowed only Jews to enter the valley. A Kashmiri shepherd wearing a robe (pheran) and a skull cap, tending his sheep near a village, is a typical scene from a Biblical movie.

If Kashmir is the Promised Land, are Kashmiris God's Chosen People? The Jews call themselves the Chosen People of God. There are many theories about the origin of

Kashmiris and some claim that they are the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel. A lot of research was done on the subject by British anthropologists in mid-19th century

who were travelling with British troops. That research concluded that many of the Kashmiri tribes were remnants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. The main start to these theories about the Jewish origin of Kashmiris was given in the book by George Moore, *Lost Tribes*, printed in 1860. Subsequently a number of books have been written on — related subjects, especially about the presence and burial of Jesus in Kashmir. These include, *The Fifth Gospel* and *In Search of Historical Jesus* by Professor Fida Hassnain; *Jesus died in India* by Faber-Kaiser; and *Jesus Lived in India* by Holger Kersten. There are other sources such as the controversial book, *Unknown Life of Christ* written by the Russian explorer Nicholas Notovitch about the Hemis Manuscript in 1889; *Jesus in Heaven on Earth* by Khawaja Nazir Ahmed of Woking Muslim Mission, UK, and a number of references in the *Bhavishya Maha Purana* and Kalhana's *Raj Tarangini*. This is an interesting subject for research.

Among the Gujars in Kashmir there are some who claim to be descendants of Bani Israel. The tribes of Pakhtoons living in Gutlibagh near Ganderbal also claim to be descendants of Moses. There are striking similarities to the etymologies of Kashmiri place names and those found in the *Torah* and the *Book of Chronicles*. There are two important objects in Kashmir claimed to be of Jewish origin. The first is the Staff of Moses, which is claimed by some to be among the relics held at the shrine of a Sufi saint in Char Sharif, and by some in the cave shrine at Aisha Madam. The other is the Ka Ka Pal stone in a temple at Bijbehara.

If we take Kashmiris to have a Jewish origin then one of the most important characteristic they have inherited is the God's curse on Bani Israel. The Holy Quran describes in